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ABSTRACT

This performance guide is designed for teachers to use with students before and after a performance of "Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile," a musical based on the books by Bernard Waber, with book by Michael Slade, music by David Evans, and lyrics by Mindi Dickstein. The guide, called a "Cuesheet," contains four activity sheets for use in class, addressing: (1) What Happens in the Story (with a brief summary for students of the story); (2) Getting Ready To See "Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile" (with several activities that each introduces and aspect of musical theatre, including Understanding the Story, From Story to Stage, What's a Musical? Actors Pretend, Props Help Tell the Story, and with background on geography, languages, including some lines from the play); and (3) Going To See "Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile" (discussing the audience's important role in a live theatre performance, and describing visiting the Kennedy Center). Resources for further exploration are listed. (SR)

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"Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile": A New Musical Based on the Books by Bernard Waber. Cue Sheet for Teachers.

by Karen P. Selwyn

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Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile

A new musical based on the books by Bernard Waber
Book by Michael Slade
Music by David Evans
Lyrics by Mindi Dickstein

What Happens in the Story?

Read the following summary to students. Follow-up questions and activities are provided on pages 2–4.

"When the Primm family moves into a new house in New York City, they discover a young crocodile named Lyle living in their bathtub. Before living in the Primm's house, Lyle had been a singer and dancer with his partner, Hector P. Valenti. Lyle got sick after traveling from city to city to perform. A doctor told Hector to find Lyle a good home. That is how Lyle ended up in the Primm's house.

"For a long time, Lyle is happy living with the Primm family. Then, he begins to miss his mother. Lyle has not seen his mother since he was young because Lyle got lost in a swamp. Hector found Lyle and taught him to sing and dance.

"Hector is invited to perform in France, but only with Lyle. Lyle refuses to leave the Primm family. Hector promises they will use the money they earn to travel to Crocodile Land to find Lyle's mother. Lyle agrees to perform again. After a long time in France, Spain and Germany, Lyle figures out they have enough money for the trip.

"Hector and Lyle travel by plane, train, boat, and hippopotamus to get to the swamp in Crocodile Land where Lyle grew up. There Lyle finds his mother. They all return to New York to visit the Primm family. Lyle and his mother live happily ever after."

FYI *(The plot includes a flashback when Hector takes Lyle to the doctor's office.)*

Cue sheet FOR TEACHERS

Welcome to *Cuesheet*, a performance guide published by the Education Department of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. This *Cuesheet* is designed to help teachers prepare students to see *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile*.

FYI **For Your Information (FYI) comments provide background information for teachers.**

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Learning Activities

Getting Ready to See *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile*

Each activity introduces an aspect of musical theater that will help students understand and appreciate the performance. In addition, pertinent vocabulary for students is underlined; introduce these vocabulary words to students.

Understanding the Story

After reading the plot summary to students, ask: "Who are the main characters in the story? What makes Lyle happy? What makes Lyle unhappy? Why does Lyle travel to Crocodile Land? How does Lyle travel?" After the performance, ask: "How does Lyle recognize his mother?" In addition, ask students about their favorite costume, favorite song, and favorite part of the performance.

Vocabulary: characters – the people and animals in a story

From Story to Stage

FYI *(Author Bernard Waber has written six books about Lyle. This musical draws from three of those books:* The House on East 88th Street; Lyle, Lyle Crocodile; *and* Lyle Finds His Mother.)

If students are familiar with Waber's books, explain that the musical has the same main characters and some of the events from the three Waber books, but there are many changes.

What's a Musical?

Help students understand *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile* is a musical where characters – both human and animal – tell a story by speaking and singing.

FYI *(In this musical, there are 11 songs, two of which are repeated.)*

For example, when the Primm's son and Lyle first meet, they talk and sing about becoming friends. Read the excerpt from the song below about how to make a friend. Invite students to tell about what they do with their best friends. Encourage them to say some of the words and sing some of the words.

Song excerpt

"You just talk about
what you like.
You talk about what
you don't like.
Play some games.
Hang around together.
Disagree and make up.
Share your dreams.
That's how you make a friend."

Actors Pretend

Bring in photographs of crocodiles as a reference. Working as a class, talk about the appearance of real crocodiles. Explain that in this musical, some actors will wear costumes and pretend to be crocodiles. Ask students to imagine what a talking, singing, dancing actor-crocodile could look like. Ask students to draw a costume an actor-crocodile could wear. After the performance, ask the students to compare the costume they drew with the costumes they saw in the production.

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Cuesheet / Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile

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ILLUSTRATIONS USED BY PERMISSION (ABOVE) FROM *LOVABLE LYLE*, (RIGHT) FROM *LYLE, LYLE, CROCODILE* (COVER) FROM *THE HOUSE ON EAST 88TH STREET*, BY BERNARD WABER, HOUGHTON MIFFLIN BOOKS.

Props Help Tell the Story

Explain that actors use things called props to help tell a story. Discuss the following list of props and ask students to imagine what each might be used for: a bath tub, a gallon can filled with Turkish caviar, a hat and a walking cane, the Eiffel Tower built on top of a hat, and sacks of money. After the performance, ask the students how the props were used.

Vocabulary: caviar – fish eggs, considered by many to be a tasty treat; Eiffel Tower – a tall metal tower in Paris, France

Geography:

Where in the World is Lyle?

Help students understand that *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile* takes place around the world. Using a classroom map or globe, help students locate New York City, France, Spain, Germany, and Holland. Lyle's home is called Crocodile Land rather than Africa. If appropriate, explain that crocodiles are found in tropical, southern Africa.

Languages:

Lyle Speaks French and Spanish and...

Explain to students they will hear the words "hello" and "goodbye" in many languages when Hector and Lyle perform in different countries. Ask students if they know the words for "hello" and "goodbye" in any language other than English. List their answers. Retain the list. After the performance, ask students which words on the list they heard in the performance. Also, ask students if they remember any additional non-English words from the musical. If so, add those words to the list.

Listen for These Lines

Before the performance, explain to students that the words the actors say (lines) and the words to the songs they sing (lyrics) help tell the story. Read the following lines aloud and ask what the lines might mean and how the characters might feel when they say these lines. Tell students to listen for these lines during the performance. After the performance, ask students which lines they heard.

"With a home and a family and a friend and a bathtub, I have no desire to return to the stage." **—Lyle**

"I lied. I promised something I couldn't deliver. I was so desperate to get back into show business...I tricked you."
—Hector P. Valenti speaking to Lyle

"I didn't leave Josh and Mr. and Mrs. Primm. I didn't do all those performances in all those countries, I didn't come all this way to just quit. I came to find my mother, and that's what I'm going to do!" **—Lyle speaking to Hector**

"You're my Lyle the crocodile
I'd know you anywhere!"**—Lyle's mother**

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Going to See *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile*

A Good Audience

Help students understand their important role when attending a live theater performance. Read and discuss the following:

"In a theater, you are the audience. Being an audience member in a theater is different from watching movies and television. In a theater, actors are in the same room with you when they perform. If you talk, the actors can't do their best. To be a good audience member you need to watch and listen carefully. In *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile*, watch for props and costumes and listen carefully for songs, words in other languages, and special lines. If you enjoy the musical, clap when it ends."

Visiting the Kennedy Center

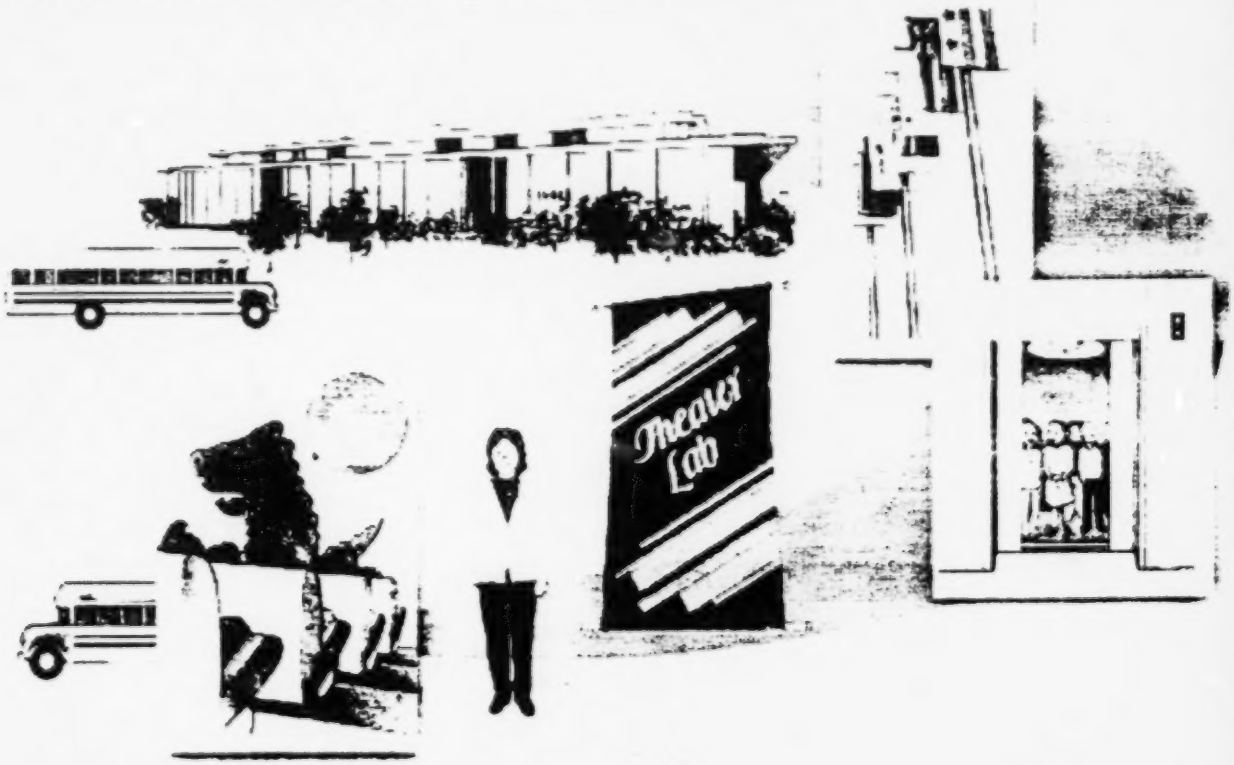
Reproduce the illustrations at the bottom of this page, making sure to cover the written information for teachers so that it does not get copied. Distribute the illustrations to each student. Ask the students to point to the appropriate illustration as you read the following explanation aloud:

"We are going to see a musical called *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile* at the Kennedy Center. You will ride a bus to The Kennedy Center. The Kennedy Center is named after John F. Kennedy, a popular president of the United States. There are six theaters in the Kennedy Center.

"When you arrive, you will walk into the Hall of States. Remember to look up to see the flags from all the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

"*Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile* will be performed in the Theater Lab. To get to the Theater Lab, you will ride in an elevator to the Kennedy Center's top floor. A large sign that says 'Theater Lab' hangs on the wall outside the theater. Inside the Theater Lab, a person wearing a red jacket – the usher – will show your class where to sit. You will sit on long, cloth-covered benches arranged in rows that go upwards like big steps.

"Four hundred people can watch a performance together in the Theater Lab!"



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